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SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/AFGHANISTAN: DASD CAGAN'S DEC. 12
VISIT TO THE HAGUE

Classified By: CDA Michael Gallagher, reasons 1.4 (b,d)

¶1. (C) Summary: During her December 12 meetings with Dutch officials, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense (A) for Coalition, Peacekeeping, and Multinational Cooperation Debra Cagan stressed the GONL has the unique opportunity -- especially with a long lead-time to August 2008 -- to work with potential contributors to ensure its extended ISAF mission in Uruzgan is well-prepared, integrated and coordinated. She stressed that the key to ensure a successful mission is enhanced training for potential contributors, and that the USG is willing to coordinate such training and consider equipment assistance requests, provided the Dutch help financially with the training. Dutch interlocutors agreed that enhancing training was important, but expressed some skepticism regarding the ability to find funding in an already stretched budgetary situation. They agreed, however, to review the situation and continue dialogue on the subject. Cagan also discussed Dutch intentions regarding the Georgian offer, the status of other Uruzgan troop contributors, and a Dutch request to extend a 2005 U.S. security guarantee to come to the assistance of Dutch troops in trouble. End summary.

¶2. (U) In a series of meetings on December 12, DASD (A) Cagan met with VCHOD Gen. Bertholee, MOD Director for General Policy Affairs Lo Casteleijn, and MOD J-5 CAPT Bauer at the MOD, and later with the PM's Foreign Affairs Advisor Karel van Oosterom and MFA Deputy Director for Security Affairs Henk Swarttouw. U.S. participants included Ambassador Arnall, ARMA COL Calbos, Executive Assistant COL Art Collins (ret.), COL Rick Selleck from Allied Command - Transformation, and polmilloff Jason Grubb.

Financial Assistance for Training/Equipment

¶3. (C) DASD Cagan hoped that her latest visit to The Hague would be the first in an on-going discussion to help the Dutch -- and NATO -- ensure that the partners contributing to the Dutch ISAF mission extension in Uruzgan province are well-prepared, integrated and interoperable. She emphasized that discussion at this point is preliminary in nature, especially as the Dutch parliament is currently debating the extension -- but she hoped to give the Dutch options to think about as they look ahead to their extension. Cagan noted that the Dutch have a unique opportunity to get the extension

right, especially with the long lead-time to August 2008, to demonstrate how a NATO mission should be properly trained and equipped.

¶ 14. (C) Cagan said the key to getting the mission right is training -- many NATO Allies can improve their contributions to Afghanistan with enhanced counter IED and counterinsurgency training. She noted recent problems with Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), which could be helped with additional training prior to deployment. But she said the Dutch and the Alliance would stand to benefit from additional training for some of their potential mission partners. In that respect, she said the USG -- in conjunction with Allied Command Transformation (ACT) -- is willing to provide such training for these contributors at the Joint Multinational Readiness Center in Hohenfels, Germany, or through mobile training teams, and could also potentially help with capacity and equipment issues.

¶ 15. (C) In exchange for training and potential equipment assistance, Cagan asked for financial support. She suggested that for approximately 10-20 million euros, the USG could provide the potential training necessary to greatly improve any Dutch extension. Cagan emphasized that Dutch financial assistance should be viewed as an investment, and stressed the importance of creating equal partners within NATO so that new members can do more.

MOD: Interested, But Difficult

¶ 16. (C) Gen. Bertholee described the proposal as "very interesting," and agreed with Cagan that few NATO Allies possess counterinsurgency experience. He also agreed with the need to invest in new members, but suggested that the Dutch parliament is very reluctant to pledge additional financial assistance toward the Dutch mission in Uruzgan. Gen. Bertholee reiterated the very strong feeling in parliament regarding burden-sharing within the Alliance. He suggested that Dutch capacity at this point was "extremely limited" -- they can barely train their own troops. However, both he and Casteleijn agreed to "look at the finances" to see what might be possible.

¶ 17. (C) Casteleijn agreed that NATO -- and the Netherlands -- is coming to the realization that more must be done in order to become "truly expeditionary," as well as being able to function in a civilian environment. He noted that the Dutch experience is growing in this regard, primarily based on its mission in Afghanistan. Casteleijn questioned the timing of the suggestion that potential contributors might require additional training, especially as the GONL is trying to make the argument to parliament that these contributions will allow the Dutch to extend in Uruzgan. Moreover, additional financial assistance for training might bolster the argument that these contributions are more trouble than they are worth. Finally, he suggested that any training be done in conjunction with the Dutch to improve interoperability. Cagan assured Casteleijn that such discussions were preliminary in nature, and certainly not for public consumption, that that training would be coordinated with the Dutch.

PM's Office/MFA: Unofficially Skeptical

¶ 18. (C) Van Oosterom also agreed with the importance of elevating the level of training for potential partners, but was skeptical that Dutch politicians would concur. He explained that one of the key conditions in getting the coalition member Labor Party (PvdA) on board was reducing the total cost of the mission. Technically, the GONL was able to answer that demand as the "official" cost will be 70 million euros less than the initial mission. Van Oosterom explained, however, that the funding for the mission will come from a number of different sources, including an enhanced defense budget, reconstruction and development funding from the MFA,

and even from parts of the national budget. In that respect, he said, the Dutch are already stretched financially to the limits. As an "unofficial answer" in what he agreed should be a continued dialogue, van Oosterom was skeptical the Dutch could even find 10-20 million euros for a worthy cause like training.

Georgia

¶9. (C) Cagan complimented Georgian military efforts in Iraq, describing Georgian 1st and 3rd Brigades as having been trained to U.S. standards regarding counter IED and maneuver tactics, and willing to "do the job" with no caveats. She directly asked whether the Dutch intend to use the Georgian contribution, and suggested the Georgians might be well-suited for a border security mission in eastern Afghanistan. Gen. Bertholee replied that diverting the Georgians to the east would "create problems" for the Dutch. Casteleijn added that officially, the GONL has been telling parliament that it is still reviewing the Georgian offer, but that did not preclude the Dutch from using the Georgians. Cagan appreciated the direct answer, and noted that if the Dutch want the Georgians, they deploy to Uruzgan.

Other Contributors

¶10. (C) Cagan said she had heard frustration expressed by Hungarian colleagues over the Dutch allegedly walking back from an agreement to forgive the debt associated with turning over the PRT mission in Baghlan in exchange for a Hungarian OMLT in Uruzgan. Gen. Bertholee and Casteleijn noted that there was a two million euro debt associated with the turnover, but there was "no issue" from the Dutch perspective as the Dutch had already agreed to forgive the debt. Gen. Bertholee and CAPT Bauer noted recent problems with the Hungary regarding the Uruzgan contribution -- the Hungarians

want to provide infantry support, while the Dutch would prefer Budapest provide combat support based on the Hungarian engineering experience in Iraq. CAPT Bauer said the Dutch assess the Hungarian infantry support element as not reliable, and would require additional infantry support from the Dutch in order to be useful.

¶11. (C) Cagan noted the French plan to reinforce its OMLT, bringing total personnel up to approximately 80 troops, and that the French would have access to Dutch food and medical services. Bauer confirmed this, describing the need to expand Dutch facilities to accommodate the larger number of forces. Bauer described cooperation thus far with the Czechs as "good," but lamented the fact that the Czechs only plan to contribute forces for six months. Cagan noted the six-month deployments from U.S. experience were a parliamentary necessity in the Czech Republic, and suggested the Czechs might be willing to stay longer -- even with their added responsibilities in Lowgar.

Security Guarantee

¶12. (C) Both Casteleijn and van Oosterom raised the "security guarantee" clause the GONL had provided to parliament at the end of 2005 in which NATO and U.S. forces would come to the aid of Dutch forces in trouble. They questioned whether such support would be extended to include the new mission in August 2008 -- such a guarantee would be important for next week's debate in parliament. Cagan offered to take that up with U.S. military authorities.

The End in 2010?

¶13. (C) Van Oosterom described the GONL letter to parliament announcing the decision to extend in Uruzgan as "awkward" due to numerous political compromises. He drew attention, however, to the paragraph noting the Dutch intention to

withdraw its Task Force Uruzgan from Afghanistan by December 2010. Van Oosterom said such language is specific to answer critics in the opposition, but also sufficiently vague to ensure that the Dutch leave open the possibility of conducting other military missions in other parts of Afghanistan. Likewise, with the Dutch intention of gradually turning the PRT in Uruzgan over to civilian control, van Oosterom did not leave out the possibility that the Dutch might stay in Uruzgan with a significant, albeit civilian, presence.

**¶14. (U) DASD Cagan has cleared on this cable.
Gallagher**